

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION.

PRESIDENT : I have received a short notice question from Mr. Padiyara Joseph Kunju which runs as follows:

"Will the Government be pleased to state whether there is any foundation for the rumour that the Dewan Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar is retiring from the Travancore service before the schemes of industrial development and other measures of public utility inaugurated by him are brought into completion?"

I will dispose of the matter. The rumour is absolutely false and is tendentious and has been so stated.

THE DEWAN-PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT.

Follow Members of the Legislature,

After the Houses of the Legislature met on the last occasion certain events have happened and new developments have taken place which I feel it to be my duty to place before the accredited representatives of the people. I also feel it my duty to take the Houses into confidence in relation to certain matters of policy which will presently be placed before this House. It will also be my privilege to make one or two announcements.

In the first place I would be failing in my duty if I do not at this rather momentous occasion draw the attention of the Travancore Legislature and the public of Travancore to the position in which the world stands today, a position of infinite complexity and of great anxiety. As one of the units of the British Commonwealth of Nations, it has been our duty and our prerogative to aid the British Commonwealth, to the extent possible to us, in waging the singular struggle that is now taking place, a struggle, the seriousness of which the people of Travancore are probably in a better position to appreciate than most others, for, they have depended and still depend to no small extent upon the freedom of the seas, upon the possibility of exports and imports and upon that progress of commercialisation and industrialisation with which the destinies of this State are so indissolubly linked. Indeed, the war affects Travancore more seriously, more urgently, more imminently than many other units of this Commonwealth and it is with the full realisation of the seriousness of the situation, of the issue involved in that situation and of the great anxiety of the people of Travancore to do what they can to help in fighting this great conflict, that various contributions monetary and otherwise have been made by His Highness the Maharaja on behalf of the State of Travancore. On the last occasion I announced to the House that a Trawler was subscribed for by His Highness. Some of the newspapers reported this wrongly and it has to be noted that the whole cost of the Trawler and its equipment was borne by the Government of Travancore. Then we paid for a Fighter Plane. In addition, we have now paid Rs. 3 lakhs towards the Viceroy's War Purposes Fund, a fund designed according to His Highness' desires to help

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those Indians who are fighting for the great cause in every part of the world, to bring them succour and relief in every possible manner. Out of the contribution of Rs. 5 lakhs provided for last year towards the relief of distress, Rs. 2 lakhs have been spent in that year. Why am I introducing this subject side by side with the war contribution? Those in Travancore who have bestowed any attention on the problem will have no difficulty in subscribing to this proposition, viz., that unlike many other units of India, in a peculiar and special degree, Travancore's relief of distress is bound up with the war. The distress has been produced because of the dwindling markets for copra, coir, cashewnut, ginger, pepper and other commercial and agricultural produce. This diminution in our trade has been alleviated only to a small extent by the action of the Government of India. We are probably lucky in regard to two products; and they are tea and rubber. Owing to a wise policy of rationalisation and control, the price of tea and rubber has been kept up and the quantity of production and export also has not seriously diminished. Though these two products are needed by every country in the world and therefore have a market, still I do not minimise the gravity of the issue before us, viz., that in practically everything that we could export we are losing on account of the situation in the West and the threatened situation in the Far East. And the shipping and transport difficulties are likely to enhance in magnitude. I would invite the attention of this House to the fact that we are faced with a crisis. We are endeavouring to surmount that crisis, in what way, I shall presently indicate.

In order that the ignorance which prevails in many quarters—and I underline those words—with reference to the position of Travancore, it is necessary for me to place certain figures before this House. In the year 1114, Rs. 4,27,000 was the value of coir products exported. In the year 1116, it came to three-fourths of it and this year it is still worse. Almost every item of export has gone down considerably. For instance, one item of export whose value was Rs. 2 lakhs and odd has dwindled to Rs. 1 lakh and 30 thousand. Taking generally the figures under sea customs which constitute a proper index of the state of our income from export and import trade stands thus. In the year 1114 our export was to the value of Rs. 8 lakhs and 43 thousand and our import amounted to Rs. 2,20,000, whereas in 1116 the export value was Rs. 5 lakhs and 25 thousand and import Rs. 53 thousand.

We are further confronted with the problem that we cannot feed ourselves and that we must import rice from Burma. In this connection I have received notice of an adjournment motion to the following effect:—Mr. P. Kunjukrishnan begs leave to move that the business of the House be adjourned for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance, viz., the impending danger of our rice supplies from Burma and Siam being cut off as a consequence of threat of war in the East, and the consequent suffering and starvation that

may visit the people of the land. I would ask the honourable member to realise that this distress and suffering is part of that great titanic struggle that is taking place and in which Japan, it is apprehended, may take a prominent and a mischievous part. Nothing that this Government can do can avert Japan's declaration of war if she is determined to make that declaration, and with the utmost sympathy for the mover of the adjournment motion I do not see how we can influence the course of the negotiation between Mr. Cordell Hull and Mr. Kurosu. But short of that and with our own imperfections and handicaps we are endeavouring to relieve the possibility of suffering by entering into arrangements in conjunction, let us hope, with Cochin, for the purchase and transport of rice from Burma and for its distribution at a fair price. Government have also under contemplation other methods of dealing with the matter. It is in a spirit of grave anxiety and of undisguised concern that Government are endeavouring to supply the deficiency of our imported rice. We shall not flinch from the sacrifices, we shall not flinch from any loss that might be occasioned by transactions which might become necessary, nay indispensable if our foodstuffs have to be preserved. Honourable members may therefore feel confident that to the extent to which this Government, a small unit in the great unit of India, will find it possible, they will supplement their rice production by storing, purchasing and entering into transactions with other countries outside. This Government will do its utmost and it feels it an imperative duty to start on such negotiations and arrangements as are necessary.

In this connection I cannot let slip this opportunity without referring to the real distress that prevails in some parts of the country. In the coastal districts, near Shertalai for instance, and in many other localities. The only thing that this Government would be anxious to prevent is the exploitation of that situation for political, communal or religious purposes by anybody. I have before me a paper called the "Arunodayam" which I consider to be a most mischievous publication. The object of the journal read right through seems to be to indicate that Government is doing very little and that certain voluntary organisations have been the largest relief agencies in Shertalai. The Government of the State has done a great deal of relief work but the suggestion of the paper is that a few miles of road and canals with the necessary bridges have been constructed giving employment to a few hundred people. These sentences are either ironical or calculated to rouse dissatisfaction and Government will regard the paper as an unhelpful and tendentiously malicious publication.

Out of the contribution of Rs. 5 lakhs provided last year towards relief of distress, about Rs. 2 lakhs have already been spent in that year towards distress relief and Rs. 1½ lakhs will be earmarked and invested in a separate fund to be utilised later in case of real and urgent necessity. The balance of Rs. 1½ lakhs will be utilised for

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In this connection I must say this in regard to relief measures at Shertalai. There is a Committee which has been constituted to undertake relief measures and the Chief Secretary to Government who has recently retired is taking great interest in this Committee. I hope that he is getting full assistance and support from his colleagues. If there is real and sincere co-operation and endeavour forthcoming from the public of the districts affected for giving adequate relief to the starving and the indigent, Government are only too willing to spend on this behalf not one lakh or two lakhs but as much as they could afford; but it only wants organisation—*bona fide* organisation. It wants some good-will. It does not want the exploitation of the undoubtedly serious situation for ulterior and sinister purposes. Government also realise that the relief should be extended not only to Shertalai but to many other places but the distress in Shertalai has been so overwhelming and so urgent that Government have to concentrate upon that. But if the present situation does not better, there might be other localities in the country which might also be brought within the purview of the activities of Government. I am asking in this matter for the utmost co-operation of everybody without reference to caste, creed or status in society. Private philanthropy is needed and Government funds are needed. And let us hope that the people and the Government will work together so that the distress which is so wide-spread and so melancholy might be dealt with in a spirit of humility, in a spirit of fellow-feeling and in a spirit of mutual confidence. This situation I have already said is dark and pitiable. I now turn to a more hopeful feature.

I stated that we have lost many markets and that our export and import trade has shrunk considerably. On the other hand, the terrible circumstances of war have enabled us to make important contributions for which we have received value, for the purpose of the prosecution of the war. I may say that so far as timber supplies are concerned the forest revenue has been really the saviour and standby of this Government. The sale of timber for the Supply Department has been on a large scale and is expected to be on a larger scale still. We have supplied rose-wood logs and rose-wood materials and further orders are pending before us on a very large scale.

Similarly, the Ceramic Factory has been able to book orders from the Supply Department in regard to insulators, in regard to crockery and various other things. We have in addition supplied 15,000 tons of cocoanut charcoal. The Rubber Factory is working during nights and days in double shifts to cope with the orders of the Government of India. The War Supply Syndicate has helped in fulfilling the execution of the orders obtained from the Government of India. Though they have been of much help in fulfilling these contracts I expect that

the Syndicate will bestir themselves and show a little more life than it has recently done. In addition, we have been responsible for the War Technicians Training Scheme. I must say that generally speaking, Travancore has distinguished itself in the matter of recruitment for the Air Force, Navy and the Land Forces. Many have volunteered to serve outside Travancore in the Army, the Navy and the Air Forces. And I am glad to inform the House that many young men have been selected for the Air Force and the Land Force of His Majesty's Government. We have as a matter of fact constituted a committee in which my friend Lieut. Col. Murphy, Resident for the Madras States, has offered to serve. He is giving his fullest co-operation for the purpose of making a preliminary selection of recruits to the Army, Navy and the Air Force. The Engineering College and the Public Works Department have been training a large number of War Technicians. The War Technical Training Scheme gave results which were very satisfactory indeed. I might mention at once that the training began on 21st April 1940. Of the 87 trainees recruited, about 40 were sent out for service. And now we are getting numerous applications to be trained as War Technicians. And so we are now contemplating to extend the training to 187 at a time. We expect that all these men will not only make good during the war but will be a great asset after the war in the matter of the contemplated industrialisation of the State.

Before I leave the subject I would like to say a few words with regard to the Relief Works done by the P. W. Department in Shertalai. I have before me a report of the Public Works undertaken in Shertalai and the Chief Engineer has assured this Government that steps are being taken to see that the Committees constituted for the purpose will not rely too much on red-tape and routine but will deal with the matter expeditiously and satisfactorily. In this connection I should like to make an observation. Relief of Shertalai means relief of Shertalai. The people of Shertalai should be given the contracts. Relief of Alleppey was intended to give relief to the people of Alleppey and it was intended that the people of Alleppey should be given the contracts. It is not for the purpose of enlarging the purse of prosperous contractors elsewhere that these works were intended to be started. The contractors must be local men and the labour must be local. I trust that the Committee and the Chief Engineer would bear this in mind. Nobody is more conscious than Government that these measures are inadequate, and pitifully inadequate. But consistently with our finances and with the possibility of shrinkage of our finances we have undertaken to make a great contribution as possible to the relief of distress. If the various districts and the localities will spend 3 lakhs for the next three months nobody will be more glad than myself.

I have received questions asking what Government are doing with regard to the increase in prices. I have received notice of an adjournment motion with regard to the increase in the price of paper. This

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again is a question closely connected with Finland and Scandinavia, because paper pulp for the use of the world at large was mainly produced in the Balkans, Finland and Scandinavia. Neither Finland nor Scandinavia is an effective source of supply today. To say therefore the price of paper has risen is to say the obvious. All that can be done is to see to possible extension with regard to the Punalur Paper Mills. We get as much as possible from these Mills. But they have to fulfil war orders and therefore there is not much hope in the immediate future unless the war situation changes, when the price of paper will go down.

The question of newsprint also arises. That is a difficult matter, and Government are going to deal with it. But I do not see much consciousness of that situation among the newspaper proprietors and editors. They have not joined together for making any concerted effort in this direction. Sporadic and individual applications are received and are dealt with sporadically and individually. I trust that those who are concerned in this matter would bestir themselves and act in an organised manner. One prominent newspaper said that the price of rice, piecegoods and hardware has risen and asks what Government can do in the matter. Hardware was mainly imported from England and Japan. England is too busy now to export hardware. And Japan too is equally busy to do any export. Now how can the price of hardware be dealt with by this Government?

The only answer is, why don't you get on with your pottery and do what your ancestors did some thousand years ago. In other words one has to recognise that there are certain inevitable factors. But Government have done something in the matter of yarn and rice. If only honourable members will go ten miles outside the boundary of the State and try to buy a pound of yarn they will know what price they have to pay outside the State. We have, thanks to the co-operation of the Harvey Mills, thanks to the co-operation of certain other mills, and thanks also to the very devoted and enthusiastic labours of the Chief Secretary and Dr. Parameswaran, entered into certain arrangements which enable us not only to keep the price of yarn at a lower level than in the whole of British India but to enable us to distribute it, though not to as many as we would like, at least to as many as possible in the circumstances. So far as rice is concerned if honourable members will make some enquiries as to the price of rice in Madras, Madura and places on the other side of the Ghats and compare the price of rice here, they will realise what Government have been doing. Government have always come to the rescue of some of the wholesale and retail merchants for the regulation of prices and are taking special measures in regard to the import and export policy to keep the prices at a proper level.

I have dealt so far with what may be called the economic situation. I now come to the political situation. I do not think that for many years there has been such peace and calm—essential peace and

calm—in this country as there is at this moment. There are on occasions, wild and reckless speeches, but whereas at one time these wild and reckless speeches threatened to translate themselves into wild and reckless actions, today the tendency is different. In the Madras Mail of the 25th or 26th November appears the following:—

"The Third Annual Conference of the Coir Workers of the Shertalla taluk was held yesterday, Mr. Janardanan Nair, M. L. A., President of the Quilon Factory Workers Union, presiding, and resolutions were passed expressing sympathy with Soviet Russia, criticising Mr. Gandhi's individual Satyagraha, demanding the release of detenus, requesting the State Congress to intensify its agitation for Responsible Government and promising all support for them in their activities, supporting the move for an All-Travancore Trade Union Federation, protesting—(mark the words)—against the Travancore Government's ban on the shouting of 'Inquilab Zindabad' meaning 'long live revolution' and the carrying of the red flag?"

At this juncture I may say this. That the Government of Great Britain is in alliance with Russia but the Government of Great Britain, as I understand it, is not in alliance with communism. The Government of Great Britain is not in alliance with revolution or the methods instigating that revolution. The strength of Russia today is not because it is an orthodox communist State but because Stalin has departed from the traditions of Trotsky and Lenin. The world realises that Stalin is not the lineal descendant of Trotsky, and therefore is it that the country is able to meet aggression in a most heroic and united fashion. Those who remember the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk would realise that the present day practice of Russia is the opposite of the ideals that animated that shameful treaty. But whatever these matters of high policy may be I may assure you that anybody who insists on shouting 'long live revolution' will find himself in jail or will be detained in Travancore. There is no ambiguity or hesitation about it. Anybody who insists on carrying the red flag will find himself in jail or be detained. There is no ambiguity or equivocation on that matter. And any labour organisation which insists on allying itself with any political party will not find encouragement from Government. That is a matter which I assert without any ambiguity or equivocation. I am glad to get an assurance from Mr. Janardanan Nair that he never made a speech on these lines. He told me that the whole matter, as reported in the "Madras Mail", was thoroughly inaccurate and was the opposite of what he intended because he wanted no alliance of labour with any political party. It is a great pity that a great newspaper like the "Madras Mail" has not correctly reported Mr. Janardanan Nair's utterances. Am I right, Mr. Janardanan Nair?

MR. KANNANTHODATH JANARDANAN NAIR (*Karunagapally, cum Karthikapally*): Yes, Sir.

PRESIDENT: That being so we are only left with this position, viz., that the resolutions have been passed, Mr. Janardanan Nair assures me, though these resolutions are opposed to what he himself

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urged. So far as Mr. Janardanan Nair is concerned, I accept his assurance at its full face value. So far as the resolutions are concerned I may frankly say that those who are responsible for them should look out for themselves, unless they take an early opportunity to apologise to Government and retrace their steps.

Now I proceed to another matter. Except for these small interruptions which really do not matter and which are but little ripples on the fairly calm political sea brought about by the uneasy alliance of professional men with labour, I am glad to say that the general situation is so quiet that the Government have been deliberately releasing one after another all the detenus. And today there are only four detenus under incarceration or detention, whatever you may call it. Mr. P. Krishna Pillai who was detained by the Madras Government under the Defence of India Rules, who evaded arrest but was finally arrested at Vaikom, was sentenced in 1932. Then he started the Kerala Congress Socialist Party and was proceeded against under Section 144 in British India and convicted in 1937 for acts inciting to violence. Realising he is a danger to this country, Government have determined to detain him unless he mends his ways. Mr. M. N. Govindan Nair is also another well-known communist who is under detention. Mr. K. C. George and R. Sugathan were convicted and are in prison. There are no other detenus in this State under confinement or under any disability whatsoever.

Now with regard to the release of prisoners, we have released within the last six months over ninety people convicted or sentenced for things which may have something to do with political opinions or political activities. They include certain labour people also. And this morning I am able to say this that, if others who are detained adopt the procedure which this Government have been insisting on and express sorrow for their past acts and promise to behave better for the future, the persons convicted in the various labour cases will also be released. Immediately I am in a position to say that certain number of persons convicted in the Neyyattinkara case in which it must be remembered that the car of the late Mr. T. R. Raman Pillai was burned to ashes—seven or eight of them have admitted their guilt and expressed their regret and said they would make amends for the past—they will be released forthwith and orders have been issued for releasing them under certain conditions. In regard to the large number of persons arrested in Kadakkal, Kallara and Pangode cases, I hope I will be able to say at the next meeting of the House that excepting a few professed communists who are a potential danger to the State there is no other person in jail for a political or quasi-political act or for misdirected endeavour. Having said that, I hope that those who come out of jails will do two things. They will refrain from a repetition of the old activities and they will refrain from allying themselves with any political or labour organisation who have been creating many unfortunate incidents in India in recent times. Remember, I have been addressing the honourable members of this House on relief measures.

How can relief be produced in the State unless the lack of agricultural commodity and the lack of exports and imports is recompensed for by an increased industrialisation and by increased agricultural activities? How can any good result be produced if there is not the utmost *camaraderie* between labour and capital, between the employer and those employed? And those who in these troublous times incite labour or act with ulterior or indirect motives are deliberate traitors to this country. I say it with more freedom because this Government have never shrunk from telling the employers that they must also look to their conduct and programme and it is for them to make the necessary adjustments between labour and capital. And whenever a case has arisen the efforts and endeavours of this Government have been directed to bring about such comradeship and mutual understanding of labour and capital as is possible. I am very glad to say that the majority of labour organisation in Alleppey, Quilon, Punalur and elsewhere have realised this and are co-operating between themselves in such a manner that Government intervention in this matter is reduced to as little as possible. Both labour and capital thrash out their differences and come to a mutual understanding. Settlement could be reached in such circumstances and this is the time when what is needed is the closest possible co-operation of labour and capital and the removal of all friction between them.

One matter more. A fashion has sprung up in Travancore in what is called hunger-strike. Mr. Nataraja Pillai hunger-struck in sympathy with the Deoli hunger strikers and because he wanted incidentally a family pension. Which was put first, I do not quite remember, perhaps Deoli came first. He hunger-struck for seven or eight days. His physical condition got worse. Doctors examined him and he was released. The moment Mr. Nataraja Pillai was released people thought that it was a good way of obtaining release. Ibrahim Kutty went on hunger-strike. But he was told by Government that they were perfectly in sympathy with fasting up to a point but they were not very much in favour of releasing people because they hunger-struck. He however saw the cogency of the argument and then ended his hunger-strike within 22 hours. Mr. M. N. Govindan Nair also resorted to hunger-strike. He wanted books from the Public Library and he wanted also certain species of cloth. I thought that the protagonist of the hunger-strike business, the great Mahatma Gandhi advocated hunger-strike not for the purpose of personal advantage, not for the purpose of getting certain increase in allowance or the facility to get books from the Public Library or to get the 'Hindu' in preference to the 'Madras Mail' but for certain highly moral, impersonal, great ideals and ends. Mahatma Gandhi advocated that a person might even fast to death if by that means he could melt the heart of his opponent and make him realise the error of his ways and come round to his own point of view. But this I may say that there is no real grievance to justify fasting in Travancore. If for certain extraneous and foreign reasons a person wants to fast, this Government is not going to interfere with the dictates of his inner impulses.

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Now, this peace, comparative peace, can be maintained only if communal peace is also attained. In this connection I am very sorry to say that many communities are making mistakes. This is not the time to rouse passions. In a book which recently came before me I found the following passage :—

"Near the southern most point of India, some fifty miles from Cape Comorin, is a way side temple to the Deaf God. At the shrine the passing peasant may for a tiny coin, hear his prayer discharged with a whiff of gun powder at the dull ears of the deity. A mocking echo is the only reply. But hard by this temple of despair, and within ear-shot of its unceasing boom, is the house of hope for the villager dedicated to a more virile faith and built upon the working philosophy that Heaven helps those who help themselves."

There are other passages which are even worse. But deliberately I am not going to give the references to these passages. I would state very strongly to those who are interested in the welfare of this country and in the prosperity of the people of this country that at no time is there any justification for one faith mocking another, at no time is there any room for ridicule or mutual aspersion. It is at this juncture that we should act as one man in comradeship and joint action. This is not the time to rouse feelings which might lead to acerbity in word or in action.

I am glad to inform this honourable House that we have concluded finally our agreement for the starting of the Aluminium Factory at Alwaye. The machinery has been ordered and very big transformers on account of the helpfulness of the Secretary of State for India are at Alwaye. It is our hope that within a few months the factory will start working. It will be the main centre for smelting aluminium for the whole of India. Not only that; it will be the centre and a nucleus of a number of subsidiary industries, so that, I expect a great many things from that factory. Even at the beginning it will employ hundred of labourers and in a very short time it will employ thousands of labourers, not only the ordinary kind but on account of the agreement that we have made with the company the employees from all grades will be chosen from the people of Travancore, provided they qualify themselves.

I am also glad to be able to announce that the machinery is getting ready for the starting of a Plywood Factory on a large scale. I had expected this factory to be started by the aid of private enterprise. But my hopes were frustrated. When we remember that every tea chest which takes tea from here to England was once imported from outside India, notwithstanding that India and especially Travancore produces wood eminently suitable for that purpose, the irony of the situation will become very clear. But we have now taken in hand the production of the machinery which is being fabricated in Calcutta and will before long be available to us. An opportunity will be given by

the Government for the local people to subscribe to that venture. I hope that they will take up the opportunity and not recommit the mistake which Travancore committed in putting aside the Travancore Sugars and the Travancore Rubber Works. The people in Travancore do not seem to realise that these great industries, once they get into outside hands, go there for ever. But Government do propose to retain a controlling interest in the Plywood Factory, hoping that if not immediately at least at some later time better counsel will prevail and that investments by Travancoreans in that concern will be feasible.

I am also glad to announce that an agreement has been concluded with that great Syndicate which controls the production and distribution of cement throughout India—the All-India Cement Combine. We are putting up a Cement Factory taking advantage of the existence of lime shells in practically infinite quantities and of other materials. But, as the machinery for that factory will take some time to come, as at this juncture it is not possible to procure it at once, we have entered into interim arrangements by which we get cement at the same rate at which we would have got if that factory had been established in Travancore, so that we get cement practically at comparatively cheap rates, much cheaper than those at which anybody outside the combine could get anywhere in India. Taking advantage of that, it is the intention of Government to start a fairly big programme of road making on the cement concrete basis which will be a source of employment to a large number of people.

I now come to a matter which very nearly concerns this House, namely, the elections. I have received representations on both sides. It has been stated that this House and its sister House have been in existence for a long time and that the mandate has lapsed and that it is well that there should be another recourse to the electorates. On the other hand, it will be remembered that in order to have an election it is necessary to have petrol facilities which do not exist. It is necessary to have a large amount of canvassing. All things considered, having regard to the practice elsewhere, this Government have decided that the term of the Legislature which expires on the 20th June 1942 will be extended by one year more.

I have done. I have taken longer than I intended at first, and I thought it as well to bring before this House all the aspects of the various problems which are confronting the Government. The task of no Government at this time is enviable. The task of this Government which has to make bricks with very little straw is especially unenviable. In that task Government confidently hope and equally confidently assume that they will get the fullest co-operation of this honourable House and through and radiating from this honourable House, the fullest co-operation from the people of Travancore.